

How One Small City Creates an “Environmentally Sensitive Community”

By Jim Hough, City Manager, Banks

“Think globally, act locally.” Environmental advocates have been saying this for years, and Banks (pop. 1,435, Washington County) has taken the concept to heart. For a small city, nestled at the foot of the Coastal Mountain Range in the rich agricultural Tualatin River watershed, environmental sensitivity is nearly a way of life. Long time residents and relative newcomers seem to all agree that concern for the environment is a high priority in the community.

Recycling programs in Banks are strong and the city has a very good participation rate. The local hauler has instituted a new roll-cart recycling program that is being well received. Rates have been adjusted accordingly and citizens are using the carts even more than the containers previously in use. This is just one way that Banks works at a local level to support a regional, national and worldwide concern for the environment.

At its most recent annual retreat, the Banks City Council, reflecting the heart of the community, adopted the goal to “create Banks as an ‘environmentally sensitive’ community.” The vision is to have the city be sensitive to its impact on the environment while not going to extremes. Logical contemplation of the local actions that can be taken by all citizens is the watchword of the City Council. The long-ago adopted logo of the city, seen above, has water, trees and land as key elements of the spirit of Banks. Environmental sensitivity is endemic in our small but mighty community. Our soon-to-be renovated City Hall is addressing as many energy efficiency items as can reasonably be incorporated



into the 75-year-old former bank building. The city staff has already changed to CFC lighting wherever possible and we do office recycling at a greater rate than most of our neighbors. Our staff believes that the city government can set an example that can be followed by our citizenry that is already desirous of reducing our impact on the environment.

Programs in the offing include: changing streetlights from mercury xenon to low sodium vapor; adopting an updated outdoor lighting ordinance to incorporate the concept of dark skies; encouraging energy efficiency in residences, businesses and public buildings; certifying five new businesses as Recycling At Work organizations; and incorporating solar energy in as many public buildings as possible. The city is also contemplating participating in the Green Power program in order to help develop clean energy power production.

Banks is in good company as many cities in our region have also committed to environmental sensitivity. Cities large and small have heard the clarion call of doing their part to “leave no footprints” as a legacy to our generations who follow us, while still enjoying the very nature that we are trying to preserve and conserve today.

So, as can be readily seen, Banks is a small but important part of the world and is poised to increase our sensitivity to the environment and our place in it. By doing so we can be global in our actions and in our thinking. We invite other small cities to come join us in our journey. ■



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